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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the sex roles portrayed over commercial radio targeting adolescents, a study conducted a content analysis of two radio stations in the Washington, D.C. market (the two stations held an average share of 30 to 35 percent of the adolescent audience in that area). The content analyzed included the advertisements, disc jockey (DJ) chatter, DJ and audience interaction, recorded and live promotions, weather, sports, news, and references to males and females. During March and April of 1987, the stations were recorded one day a week for seven weeks. The times chosen for coding were determined by Arbitron ratings indicating that the highest percentage of adolescents listened on Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. through midnight, and on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Analysis revealed that the majority of the voices heard over the radio were male. The only categories where women were dominant were in traffic reports and as the audience. In advertisements, the majority of the ads were male voiced. Females were usually the passive receivers of the message but rarely the senders. Males were referred to with a title of some kind more often than females. Females were referred to as "ladies," part of the family (mothers, wives, daughters, etc.), women, or girls, while males were referred to as guys, Mr., or men. (MM)

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It's Not What They Play, It's What They Say:
A Content Analysis of DJ Chatter.

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for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender

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Introduction

Research on sex role stereotypes in media has been documented in various mass communication forms: newspaper comics (Brabant and Mooney, 1986); magazine advertisements (Goffman, 1977); magazine photographs (Sparks and Fehlner, 1986): prime time television shows (Haskell, 1979; Weigel & Loomis, 1981; Goff, Goff & Lehrer, 1981); Saturday morning cartoons (Mayes & Valentine, 1979; Aitken, 1988); television ads (Courtney & Whipple, 1974); popular music (Hyden & McCandless,); and even news stories from the wire press (Luebke, 1985). Within the study of the various media forms, the impact on specific age groups is often the focus. The impact of Saturday morning cartoons is especially relevant when discussing young children; the effect of negative ethnic stereotypes in music videos is of prime importance when discussing the development of black youth; and the increased portrayal of women and the elderly as victims on prime time television has great impact on each group's fears about the real world.

Research that focuses on adolescents (12 to 17 year olds) typically revolves around the impact of popular music, and lately on music videos. During teen-age years, youth moves away from family media use (television) and toward the more solitary activity of audio listening. Adolescents increase their use of radio (due to its mobility, accessibility, and lack of parental control) and increase their use of records, tapes, and CDs (depending on their financial situation).

Previous research on children and radio studied 5 to 11 year olds (Christenson) and found that the older the child, the more

radio s/he consumes. More recently, studies focusing on adolescents have been interested in their use of new media forms such as music videos (Brown et al, 1986; Sun & Lull) or popular music (Gantz, et al). Other studies combine adolescent's use of radio with their use of television (Brown & Bauman). Of those studies which do focus on adolescents and radio (Dominick), few focus on more than the music content of radio. It is my contention that programming which surrounds the music is of equal importance.

Why is it important to study radio content and its impact on adolescents? First, radio receives increased usage by adolescents. It is a solitary activity, yet one which connects each individual to a youth culture. Second, the majority of adolescents listen to rock and/or pop music stations. There are usually multiple rock stations in each market. Therefore, it is the dj not the music which attracts listeners. Last, DJs are seen by adolescents as authority figures, speaking out for adolescents. They are stars and idols and what they say has significance. While the study of popular music is important to the understanding of sex role stereotypes to which adolescents are exposed, the study of the program content surrounding the music, it seems to this author, is of equal importance.

This Study

The focus of this study concerns the sex roles portrayed over commercial radio targeting adolescents. The content analysis reported here is one part of a larger research program designed to understand the use of radio by adolescents.

The content analyzed included the advertisements, news, sports, traffic, audience interaction, and other DJ. chatter broadcast on commercial radio stations targeting 12 to 17 year olds. The analysis of this content provides an peek at the roles and rules offered adolescent males and females.

The content was collected from two radio stations in the Washington, D.C. market. They were chosen based on their ratings and shares of 12 to 17 year old audience. In a market of 39 plus radio stations, these two stations held an average share of 30 to 35 of the adolescent audience. That means that 35% of all adolescents listening to radio during a specific 15 minute time period, listened to one of these two stations.

During March and April of 1987, these two stations were recorded one day a week for seven weeks. The times chosen for coding were also determined by Arbitron ratings which indicated that:

Monday through Friday 6 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Monday through Friday 7 p.m. through midnight

and Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

there was the highest percentage of adolescent listeners. All recorded popular music was eliminated and the remaining programming was transcribed and coded. The categories included: Advertisements, DJ Chatter, DJ and Audience interaction, Recorded and Live Promotions, weather, news, sports, and references to males and females.

Each category was then given subcategories. For Example:

Advertisements: male voice over
female voice over
both voices within the same ad
male singing in ad
female singing in ad
both singing in ad

The following is a breakdown of the 19,295 lines of data which were entered and coded.

Advertisements: 24% of the total lines were advertisements. Of those ads, 61.9% were male voiced over. Ads were considered predominantly male ads if 2/3 or more of the lines were voiced by males. Fifteen point five percent were female voiced over. Ads were considered predominantly female ads if 2/3 or more of the lines were voiced by females. Twenty-two point three five percent were male and female voiced over. Male/female ads were those which did not have more than 2/3 of the lines predominantly male or female.

DJ Chatter: 32% of the total lines were DJ chatter. Of that chatter, 96% of the talk was by male DJs. Four percent were by female DJs (Saturday am).

News: 4.5% of the total lines contained news. 100% news was delivered by a male voice.

Likewise, sports accounted for 1.2 % of the total lines and was always delivered by males. Although in one case, the male was stereotyped as a gay male and spoke, supposedly, to a female audience. The only categories that females were higher than males

were under DJ and Audience interaction and Traffic. As a traffic reporter, females were dominant (100%) as a support service for the DJs although this was not unlike news and sports which were dominated by males and were support services for the DJs. Females were also the majority of the with whom the DJs interacted (55% versus male 45%).

A secondary category system revolved around the references (titles) used to describe males and females. For example, males were referred to as boys, guys, men, or Mr. while females are referred as as girls, gals, women, or Mrs. These references did not include proper names and were crossindexed with the larger categories of ads, dj chatter, sports, etc.

Results included: of the 1190 lines which included references to males and females, 37% of the lines had some reference to females. Sixty-three percent contained references concerning males.

Three subcategories made up the majority of the titles for females. They include references to females in DJ chatter (32%) of all female titles, references to female audience in conversations with Djs (27%) of all female titles and references to females in advertisements (25%).

For males, the pattern was the same with the majority of the references made in DJ chatter (45%), followed by references in audience/DJ interaction (27%), followed by references to males in advertisements (19%).

At this point, not all the data on all references (titles) have been computed. But one case, references used in DJ chatter,

may show a pattern. An analysis of the use of titles in DJ chatter shows the following:

The dominant references for males is "guy" or "guys" (30.9%).This is followed by "man" or "men" (10.9%). This coding does not include the colloquial use of "hey, man" or "what you doing, man?"

References to females were dominated by "ladies" or "lady" (31%). This was followed by "woman" or "women" (16.4%) and "girl" or "girls" (12.4%).

In general, the expected set of related terms for males and females did not hold. The term "guys" (30.9%) did not equate with the term "gals" (12.4%). The term "men" (10.9%) did not equate with "women" (16.4%). "Boy" (5.0%) did not equate with "girl" (12.4%) and the term "gentleman" (5.6%) did not equate with "lady" (31%).

There was one area of similarity in terms of address. Males were referred to as "Mr." 5.9% of the time while females were referred to as "Miss" (2.9%, "mrs." (2.2%) or "Ms." (.72%) of the time equaling approximately 5.8%. Therefore the terms of address were quite close.

Most notable was the references to males and females in familial roles. These references included mother, father, wife, husband, sister, nephew, etc. Females (25.5%) were referred to over 5 times more often by their family role than were males (5.0%).

So what does all this mean? Overall, the majority of the voices heard over the radio are male whether it be in the ads, promotions, dj chatter, news or sports. The only categories where women are dominant is in traffic and as the audience. Women as the audience for radio stations follows the same pattern prescribed for women in rock music. Women's roles as part of the rock and roll experience were as fans of the stars, the audience, groupies, or front singers. In radio, females remain dominant as part of the passive receiver of the message but rarely the maker of the message. DJs, who are the "stars" of their shows and controllers of the action are males 95% of the time.

In advertisements, the majority of the ads were male voiced. When these ads were broken down, it was found that women's voices were used when the product concern women alone (dresses, or make-up, for example). While men's voices were used for products which related to either males or females. Therefore, men's voices represented the non-sexed products (cars, concerts, for example).

Although analysis of the titles are incomplete at this writing, data indicates that references to males and females differ. Males are referred to with a title of some kind more often than females. Of the 19,224 lines, 339 of those lines refer to males while only 137 of those lines refer to females. If the DJ chatter group analyzed is any example, females are referred to as "ladies" or part of the family (mothers, wives, daughters, etc.), women or girls while males are guys, men, or Mr. This reinforces that females are less active (ladies) and predominantly family oriented while males are "one of the guys"

or men.

Although research concerning media content and its effect on audience members cannot be directly linked, there are several theories which indicate that an increased exposure to media may have some effect. These include modeling theory, identification theory, and, perhaps the most compelling one, George Gerbner's cultivation theory. Gerbner and associates have indicated that "heavy" viewers of television have a skewed sense of reality, viewing their world more like television. Their perceptions, therefore, of reality are modified by the roles and situations they see on television. Applying this same theory to the heavy use of radio by adolescents may necessitate the need for a better understanding of all radio programming and its possible effects on adolescents growth and socialization.

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